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THE BEST POEMS OF 1923



The
BEST POEMS
of 1923



Selected
by THOMAS MOULT &

Decorated by
PHILIP HAGREEN

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To
THE MEMORY
of
MAURICE HEWLETT
and
HERBERT TRENCH

253946

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(An asterisk denotes America)

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INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of the present volume has already been explained at length, in the prefatory note to its predecessor, *The Best Poems of 1922*. It is a collection of what, in the compiler's estimate, were the best poems published in English and American periodicals during the twelve months from January to December, 1923, and is intended primarily as a survey of contemporary activities in poetry.

If we were living in an ideal condition for the arts the whole motive of the book might have been to direct readers to what, in the year's work, is deemed worthy of their attention, by the simple process of recording that on such a date to this or that magazine or journal Mr. So-and-so contributed verses entitled Such-and-such: and other poems would be singled out and emphasized in like fashion. Readers would then require no further inducement to seek for themselves among the files of periodicals. But our condition is still far from the ideal, and few have the leisure for such a pursuit, apart altogether from the question of opportunity and inclination. Therefore, if only for poetry's sake, the poems must have the additional emphasis of reproduction.

With barely an exception the poets whose contributions are harvested from the public prints of 1923 have generously relieved the compiler of the conventional anthologist's difficulties—just as did the poets represented in the volume for 1922. Cordial acknowledgment of this assistance is now offered to each of them, and of the ready endorsement of

their permissions to the editors of the various journals in which the poems first appeared. Acknowledgment is also offered for help equally ready and necessary to certain publishers, including Henry Holt and Co. (*re* Robert Frost), the Macmillan Co. (Edwin A. Robinson), G. H. Doran (Christopher Morley), Thomas Seltzer (W. K. Seymour), and Norman Remington (Lizette Woodworth Reese) of the U.S.A.: and, of England, Constable and Co. (*re* Katherine Mansfield and George Santayana), John Lane (Frank Kendon), and William Heinemann (Dorothy Wellesley). The poems are printed in chronological order.

Two incidental facts are to be noted. The compilation is not concerned with *books* of verse issued during the year. . . . The poets of England and America are being assembled together for almost the first time in English literary history.

The dedication affixed to the opening pages is a sad reminder of what losses poetry has sustained since the previous volume was compiled. We may find consolation in the fact that the poets to whose memory it has been thought timely to pay tribute have passed away during a period of creative energy on the part of their fellows which shows no sign of exhaustion. Indeed, the claim made a year ago by the compiler may be reaffirmed: that poets of fame and distinction in two countries are plainly writing with as much truth, beauty, and strength as ever they have done, and poets whose distinction is in no way proportionate to their fame have seldom written better. That the reaffirmation is not made lightly will, he believes, be discovered in the following pages.

THOMAS MOULT

THE BEST POEMS OF 1923



JAMES STEPHENS

LITTLE THINGS

LITTLE things that run and quail
And die in silence and despair;

Little things that fight and fail
And fall on sea and earth and air;

All trapped and frightened little things,
The mouse, the coney, hear our prayer:

As we forgive those done to us,
The lamb, the linnet, and the hare,

Forgive us all our trespasses,
Little creatures everywhere.



H. D.

HELEN

ALL Greece hates
the still eyes in the white face,
the lustre as of olives
where she stands,
and the white hands.

All Greece reviles
the wan face when she smiles,
hating it deeper still
when it grows wan and white,
remembering past enchantments
and past ills.

Greece sees unmoved
God's daughter, born of love,
the beauty of cool feet
and slenderest knees;
could love indeed the maid,
only if she were laid
white ash amid funereal cypresses.



HAZEL HALL

THEY WILL COME

THEY will come, at last they will come, who have
not gone by:

The many that time and life have not yet defined.
Even now the sound of their tread is a cry
Moving along my mind.

They will come and like mist be blown down a
shadowy street,

Even as others have come and were mistily blown.
They will move to music of unisoned feet,
Yet each, like others, alone.

Their eyes will be sharpened as eyes of the others
were not;

They will see in the sun, hear more in the wind
than sound;

They will feel in the cold crusts of earth the hot
Desires of the ground.

All that others have known of longing and pain
Will be immeasurably theirs; they must reckon
and face

Rapture unknown, then pass like the rain
Drifting on into space.

THOMAS HARDY

ON THE PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN ABOUT TO BE HANGED

COMELY and capable one of our race,
Posing there in your gown of grace,
Plain yet becoming;
 Could subtlest breast
 Ever have guessed
What was behind that innocent face,
Drumming, drumming!

Would that your Causer, ere knoll your knell
For this riot of passion, might deign to tell
 Why, since It made you
 Sound in the germ,
 It sent a worm
To madden Its handiwork, when It might well
Not have assayed you,

Not have implanted, to your deep rue,
The Clytaemnestra spirit in you,
And with purblind vision
 Sowed a tare
 In a garden fair,
And a thing of symmetry seemly to view
Brought to derision!

GEORGE STERLING

THE FOG-SEA

I

THE morning is ten thousand miles away.
The winter night surrounds me, vast and cold,
Without a star. The voiceless fog is rolled
From ocean-levels desolate and grey;
But over all the floods of moonlight lay
A glory on those billows that enfold
The muffled sea and forest. Gaunt and old,
The dripping redwoods wait the distant day.

Unknown, above, what silver-dripping waves
Break slowly on the purple reefs of night!
What radiant foam ascends from shadowy
bars,
Or sinks unechoing to soundless caves!
No whisper is upon those tides of light,
Setting in silence toward the risen stars.

II

O phantom sea, pale spirit of unrest!
There is no thunder where your billows break.
Morning shall be your strand; your waters make
An island of the mountain-top, whose crest
Is lonely on the ocean of your breast.
No sail is there save what our visions take
Of mist and moonlight, on whose ghostly wake
Our dreams go forth unuttered to the West.

The splendour on your tides is high and far,
Seen by the mind alone, whose wings can sweep
On wilder glories and a vaster deep.
Chill are your gulfs, O sea without a song!
Hiding the heavens from man, man from the star,
To which your parent sea endures as long.



EDMUND BLUNDEN

THE SPELL

LOUD the wind leaps through the night and fills
the valley with his wings,
The bleak fields not a furlong hence, in such black
hours as these,
Terrify, so lonely grown; the rain sweeps down to
swell the springs
And beats about the happy house where I may
take my ease,
And beats with fury far and near
The fields of loneliness and fear.

In the still decline that led the blind year to his
misery,
We have walked among the woods and on a sud-
den heard,
When not a tremor stole through air, the deadly fall
from some one tree
Of leaves that knew the time and answered God's
unspoken word.
So seems it now with me, my own
Is vacant all; I must be gone.

This might be that selfsame night when good King
Lear was running wild
Over the hoarse unglimmering heath, and glorious
met the storm;

I would then have followed him, for now I know
myself beguiled
By impulse nameless from the hearth, where I
might huddle warm,
In tooth of all the storms that ever
Were, to rove the wild lands over.



WILLIAM A. NORRIS

FACTS

FIGURE this out:

There was a man who loved horses,
And dogs with big brown eyes,
And cold winds over the fields in autumn;
And between riding upwind and stroking a dog's
 head in the firelight
He found time to get married
And have three children,
And grow old with deep wrinkles under his eyes.

And there was a man who smoked long pipes,
Sitting in his study by an oil lamp,
Turning old yellow pages
And brushing the dust from his knees;
And between Plato and Robert Browning
He found time to get married
And have three children,
And grow old with deep wrinkles under his eyes.

To-night the dead leaves scratch on a pair of tomb-
 stones,
And only a wry-faced moon hears the wind talking,
Talking about dogs and horses,
Talking about Plato and Robert Browning.

LORD DUNSMY

A SONG OF WANDERING

SOME crumpled-rose-leaf mountains from forty
miles away
Are luring me towards them through all the blazing
day,
Some crumpled-rose-leaf mountains, flecked here and
there with blue,
They call to me and beckon as elfin hands might do.

And deeper pink beyond them a double summit
towers,
Like Chronos grave and weary above the younger
Powers.
Behind me the Sahara, before those barren crags,
And with me the old hunter, illustrious in his rags.

When I am back in London, among the hoardings'
blaze,
And pictures of bad food and salt that men are paid
to praise,
When, bright with lights that dim the stars, the
foolish words are writ,
To Crumpled-rose-leaf Mountain my thoughts will
fly from it.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER

THREE THINGS

THREE things filled this day for me,
Three common things filled this day;
Each had, for me, a word to say;
Said it in beauty, and was done:
Cows on a hillside all one way,
A buttercup tilted seductively,
And a lark arguing with the sun.

These three things, merely these three,
Were enough to cry the world
Out of my heart: the buttercup curled
Where some gorgeous ruffian plundered;
The skylark's dizzy flag unfurled;
The placid cows pensively
Wondering why they wondered.



OWEN BARFIELD

DAY

DOWN in the fens of Lincolnshire a bird
Threw up his head and uttered (like some word,
Spoken in hope, that very softly falls
Upon the silence of despair) two calls.
He waited: and innumerable trills
Filled the old darkness. . . .

Over Malvern Hills
A lark went twittering up into the sky. . . .
One seagull down the cliffs of Anglesey,
Even as the dawn-song of this lark was dying,
Called, and the coast was filled with swooping and
crying.

*

A tiny pool of light that slid and spread
In shoots and runnels over the flat lead
Face of the chill North Sea: then colour came:
The pool of light turned to a pool of flame
That smoked up into a purple and red mass,
Where—like a face behind a darkened glass—
A circle faint out of the dimness grew,
And, flown with the wine of dawn, looked strangely
through
At island hill-tops rising warm and green
Out of the blind white seas of mist between.
Chiltern and Cotswold's upland grasses glistened,
Colouring the light with dew: the clear air listened.

*

Silent He rose out of that dreamy pall
And hung in the blue ether clear and small,
Till, underneath, the hills left dry and bright
Drew closer, and the valleys ran with light. . . .
Silent He rose and arched up over, and soon
The golden languor of the afternoon
Slept over meadows and sheep-dotted downs
And danced upon the pavements of the towns. . . .
Silent He fell, and east to meet the van
Of night the great Welsh mountain-shadows ran,
Rippling over undulating miles
Of English counties. Piles upon deep piles
Of crimson pageantry were slowly heaped
Against the West. Birds sang. The air was steeped
In memory. Dusk flittered like a bat
Down over England, hovered, and then sat
Darkling upon her, till she cast aside
Her twilight vestments, like a calm young bride,
When love himself has broken down his bars,
And spread her bosom to the quiet stars.

AMANDA HALL

“TOO SOON THE LIGHTEST FEET ”

TOO soon the lightest feet are lead,
All tongues of silver cease:
Ev'n Shakespeare with a word half said
Is pledged to hold his peace!

So artlessly kings fall asleep,
Wearing their crowns awry.
Their hands forget what they would keep
And loosen as they lie.

And lovers mellow to the sound
Of meadow larks in spring
Grow inattentive underground
Nor heed them when they sing.

I dare not say my joy is great,
Time presses on me so.
Counting the early hour as late
What space I have to go.

But faint for rapture like the rest
Life chooses so to mock
Speechless, I hold love to my breast
And listen to the clock!

HAROLD TROWBRIDGE PULSIFER

THE HARVEST OF TIME

TIME winnows beauty with a fiery wind,
Driving the dead chaff from the living grain.
Some day there will be golden sheaves to bind;
There will be wonder in the world again.
There will be lonely phrases born to power,
There will be words immortal and profound;
Though no man knows the coming of the hour,
And no man knows the sower or the ground.

It may be even now the ranging earth
Lifting to glory some forgotten land
Feels there deep beauty quickening to birth,
Sprung from the sowing of a hidden hand.
Beauty endures though towering empires die.
O, speed the blown chaff down the smoking sky!



GEORGE SANTAYANA

A MINUET ON REACHING THE AGE OF FIFTY

OLD AGE, on tiptoe, lays her jewelled hand
Lightly in mine. Come, tread a stately measure,
Most gracious partner, nobly poised and bland;
Ours be no boisterous pleasure,
But smiling conversation, with quick glance,
And memories dancing lightlier than we dance—
Friends, who a thousand joys
Divide and double, save one joy supreme
Which many a pang alloys.
Let wanton girls and boys
Cry over lovers' woes and broken toys.
Our waking life is sweeter than their dream.

Dame Nature, with unwitting hand,
Has sparsely strewn the black abyss with lights,
Minute, remote, and numberless. We stand
Measuring far depths and heights,
Arched over by a laughing heaven,
Intangible and never to be scaled.
If we confess our sins, they are forgiven;
We triumph, if we know we failed.

Tears that in youth you shed,
Congealed to pearls, now deck your silvery hair;
Sighs breathed for loves long dead
Frosted the glittering atoms of the air
Into the veils you wear
Round your soft bosom and most queenly head;
The shimmer of your gown

Catches all tints of autumn, and the dew
Of gardens where the damask roses blew;
The myriad tapers from these arches hung
Play on your diamonded crown;
And stars, whose light angelical caressed
Your virgin days,
Give back in your calm eyes their holier rays.
The deep past living in your breast
Heaves these half-merry sighs;
And the soft accents of your tongue
Breathe unrecorded charities.

Hasten not; the feast will wait.
This is a master-night without a morrow.
No chill and haggard dawn, with after-sorrow,
Will snuff the spluttering candle out
Or blanch the revellers homeward straggling late.
Before the rout
Wearies or wanes, will come a calmer trance.
Lulled by the popped fragrance of this bower,
We'll cheat the lapsing hour
And close our eyes, still smiling, on the dance.



PHYLLIS MEGROZ

THE SILVER BRIDE

THE Silver Bride, the Silver Bride,
I saw her standing at my side,
The moon fled pallid and dismayed,
The star-hosts scattered disarrayed,
The wind stood hesitant and dumb,
And dared not go and dared not come.
No creak of wood, no scuttling mouse
Made friendly clamour in the house,
All still, all tranced, all deathly was,
And through that form as through a glass
Familiar shapes shone strange and clear.
My heart grew cold with coiling fear.
“Why do you seek me, Silver Bride?”
I moaned, and calmly she replied:
“*I am your thought made manifest,*
Possessing me you are possessed.
For you are he whose stinging scorn
Struck every man of woman born,
Broke every link ’twixt heaven and earth,
These things you said were nothing worth,
And bent your spirit to adore
Your brain and all its garnered store.
I am that brain made manifest,
Possessing me you are possessed.
Link hands, link hands, lean down and press
My loving lips in long caress.
What! you grow cold, you tremble so,
You would go free? You shall not go.”

“ O God,” I shrieked in terror drowned,
“ Unchain this house in slumber bound,
One little, common, kindly sound
Grant me to hear for Jesu’s grace,
Let me but see one human face
Peer through the window—” “ Silence! ”
cried

With splintering mirth the Silver Bride,
“ Not Christ himself nor any man
Your charmed circle enter can,
For thou hast cut the human chain
To kneel in worship to thy brain.
I am that brain made manifest,
Possessing me thou art possessed,
Lean close, lean closer to my breast ” . . .
And I shall never put aside
The Silver Bride.



ROBERT FROST

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

WHOSE woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

The little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

JOHN FREEMAN

ADAM

MY spirit drowsed within his den,
His den of dull desires and scorns,
And blunted hopes, fond foul regrets—
Dark miry woods of poison thorns.

Those antique toads, old passions, crawled
Upon my bones with breathing chill;
A torpid snake within my breast
Crouched Adam's wanton wasting will.

—Drowsed, drowsed. Till Eve came breaking
through
The red-tongued thorn and virgin bud,
And leaned her warmth against my stone,
And quick'd with hers this Adam's blood.



BABETTE DEUTSCH

APOCRYPHA

WHEN John the Baptist was so young
That he had not yet learned to speak
A syllable of his native tongue,
The voice must have been shrill and weak
Wherewith his mother's heart was wrung.

When Jesus' fists uncurled to clutch
The shavings in his father's beard,
Before he learned to like to touch
The screws and nails his mother feared,
Small wandering hands had hurt her much.

When Judas was so frail a child
He sucked and slept, and little more, —
His mother, patient still, beguiled
The baby she must needs adore.
He shaped a kiss: all day she smiled.

F. V. BRANFORD

ODE TO SORROW

I

IMMORTAL Sorrow, that with the spirit of God
Didst journey on the dark original seas,
On peaks of ancient night thy foot was shod
To walk the scope of all immensities
Obscurely embryoned in the water's womb.
Yea, in that hollow No-Time thou didst share
Breath with Being; a solitary tomb
Mounds over ruined worlds;—and thou art there.

II

What desperate hand would draw the aetherial veil
That robes thy searchless secret? What dread lips
Might mould a world-consuming oracle
If man could dare that dark apocalypse?
Dim premonitions of impending doom,
Like bodiless eagles on the verge of thought,
Float through the senses, vanishing in gloom,
Ghosts of all things that are, and yet are not.

III

Lo! from the topless pinnacle of mind
Bold Nature brags a high unmortal merit;
But little ruth in thee shall Nature find
Whose sight is ever nailed on changeless spirit.

Thou art a law, pale adamantine Queen,
Whose mandate runs through all the shires, and
saith
To dust and deity, cosmic and terrene,
“ Seek manumission in the Courts of Dèath.”

IV

Though bloody sweat stand beaded on the brow
Of aeons labouring on fire-sown soil,
Still, on unchallenged Golgotha, art Thou
Serenely towered above the tides of toil.
From void to void Time flings the enormous forms,
Systems of wheeling suns, till space doth swell,
But thou are throned beyond the solar storms,
Cloudless and calm and inaccessible.

V

Unearthly mountains from an ice-gulfed base
Rear around thy shrine their glittering domes,
Thy bare and barren beauty to implace.
Alone the death-devoted prophet comes,
Strange to all loves, an exile, yet elate,
Daring those perilous domes from fear to fear,
With wild transtellar hope, or starry hate,
To drink an unseen presence, or to hear
An awful silence talking in his ear.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

A PURITAN LADY

WILD Carthage held her, Rome,
Sidon. She shook to tears
Tall, golden Helen, wearying
Behind the Trojan spears.

Old Antwerp knew her well;
She wore her sober gown
In some tall house in Oxford grass,
Or lane in Salem town.

Humble and high in one,
Cool, certain, different,
She lasts; scarce saint, yet half a child,
As hard, as innocent.

What grave, long afternoons,
What caged airs round her blown,
Stripped her of humour, left her bare
As cloud, or wayside stone?

Made her as clear a thing,
In this slack world as plain
As a white flower on a grave,
Or sleet sharp at a pane?

L. A. G. STRONG

SHEEPSTOR

THE little granite church upholds
Four pinnacles like holy hands,
A missionary proclaiming God
To ancient unbelieving lands.

Long time it dared the indifferent hills
Child-like, half-frightened, all alone,
Lest chink of matin bell offend
The mother of its quarried stone.

Now, proven at last, it guards its peace,
Yet may not sleep, remembering
How on the moor above it stand
Stone row and mound and pagan ring.



CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

SPRING AND THE ANGEL

I

IT was that time of year when green things grow
As if by grace, all over the jubilant earth;
That time of budding tree, ascending grass
And fragrant lanes when hawthorn blossoms break,
And orchards first put on their delicate tints.
April! Another April over the land,
With soft rains summoning the laggard troops
Of hyacinths and early primroses.
April! with birds that call from blowing branches
The news that heaven has kissed the waking earth,
And roused to sudden rapture beauty that slept.
How diligent the army of the flowers!
In beautiful battalions, lo! I saw
Their ranks of coloured uniforms appear
And march in splendour down the singing hills.

II

Now who could weary of the budding boughs,
Though thrice ten million stretched their flowery arms,
As if to bless the earth?

There was in heaven
An angel who leaned down when Spring had come,
As if to drink the perfume of the world
In one long draught, so eager was his soul
For the old wonder that he knew when life
Upon the hills was one long cry of youth.

The streets of jasper and of fabled pearl,
High golden gates and fields of asphodel
Were wearisome to him. The storied towers
Filled him with languor. "Lord, I crave the Spring—
The earthly Spring that wakens now below,
And I would fare to woods grown green again,
To river banks where mosses kiss the water,
And shy birds call when sap begins to run.
I hunger for the lost delight that poured
In sunlight on one dear remembered hill.
I pine for the scent of lilacs wet with rain;
Oh, I am homesick for the fragrant earth!"

III

Then God released him from the shining streets,
And straightway down the stairway of the sun
This anxious spirit fled, and softly reached
(Unknown to man) the meadows of the world.
He took bright highways when the cup of noon
Was overflowing with pale loveliness.
And when the slow, still mornings, white with peace,
Made his heart ache that such a time could be,
This angel moved, unseen, by orchard walls,
And leaned to watch the grass break through the
ground.
He sped through gardens when the moonlight
drenched
The earliest buds with clean cascades of beauty;
And when the April stars hung in the sky,
He was a ghost that sighed with joy, being home
After so long a pilgrimage in heaven.

IV

We wondered why the Spring was doubly dear
On certain days and nights. We did not know
That one from all the sources of high things
Had breathed a special blessing on the grass,
And touched each flower before it opened wide—
A truant angel, whose great wings had brushed
The emerald hills, and, happy, disappeared!



ANNE GOODWIN WINSLOW

THE UNREGRETTING

IS he indeed provoked to anger with high places,
And jealous of the graven forms we make
With patient hands
For some far beauty's sake?
See how the dust the chiselled dream effaces,
See where on every hill a broken column stands!

Is then our willing not what he has willed,
Or have we borrowed powers he has not lent,
That thus with labours infinite he lets us build
Up from the plain,
Then sees we have not made the thing he meant
And bids us build again?

Perhaps he takes no joy in any ancient thing;
No slow perfection that we strive to hold
To him seems dear;
His perfect leaf falls with his perfect year;
For he is young and will have back the spring;
But we are old.

Perhaps he keeps no bond at all with memory,
Nor owns the strong delusion whence
We still must see
In all created loveliness
The broken promise of its permanence.
For us the shadow of its history
Falls dark on what we dream or do;
He only knows the great forgetfulness
That maketh all things new.

IANTHE JERROLD

IN SPRING

NOW, when the leafless branches of the elms
First fret the sky with little naked flowers,
When from the sloe the winds shake down white
rain,

And from slim willows dusty golden showers,
Now pale wild arums first disclose dark spears,

And cuckoo-spit first scents the soggy grass—
Light-glancing and light-stepping, down the lane,
I look in vain to see your spirit pass.

Now the swift rain you loved comes slanting down,

And sudden sunshine glitters on the ponds,
When rainbow drops bepearl white gossamer,

And twinkle on the curled-up bracken fronds,
Alone, among the breaking buds, I think:

On what sweet turf your feet go wandering,
What frail and lovely boughs your eyes behold,
To make you heedless of this earthly Spring!



HELEN FRAZEE-BOWER

ALIEN

WITHIN the still, white room that gave me birth,
My body bloomed, the counterpart of two
Who bore me; but alone, across the earth,
Miles from that place, the heart they never knew
By wise moon fairies on a far high hill
Was being woven out of threads of mist;
Its fragile beauty was a thing more still
Than any lake the wind has ever kissed.

And I have borne it secretly within,
A shy soft wonder sleeping at my breast;
And such has been dissemblance I could win
That even those who bore me have not guessed,
When misty moonlight blows from tree to tree,
How near they are at last to finding me.



WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

SHEEP BONES

(For Robert Graves)

SHEEP that have died on the mountains,
These their bones,
Here where the falcons hover,
High among stones.

Small, white, eloquent things,
Fleshed once, and warm,
Broken and burned and bleached
By sun and storm.

Lithe on the craggy fell-side
They skipped and ran,
Crouched, cropping the short grasses,
Careless of man,

Save when with whistlings and shrills
And sudden cry
The shepherd guided his dogs,
Clear against sky.

Strayed they, weary and sick? They fell
High among stones;
The dawn heard their cries, and the night:
These their bones.

LADY MARGARET SACKVILLE

THE DROWNÈD LOVER

AS I was a-walking upon my wedding-day
I met my drownèd lover who stood and barred
my way—

“ Oh! wherefore are you standing all dripping on the
quay,
I thought you soundly sleeping ten fathoms deep
at sea! ”

I saw my drownèd lover, quite close I saw him stand,
His hands and face and hair and coat all black and
caked with sand,
All dripping, rough and weedy—but not a word he
said,
Just stood and stared with blinded eyes a-starting
from his head.

“ Oh! Tom! I loved you dearly, I could not love you
more,
But there's no sense in drownèd men come floating
to the shore;
And must a maid go creeping through all her days
alone,
Whilst fathoms deep her lover lies cold as any
stone? ”

Now, is it not a hard thing the day I am to wed,
To have my drownèd lover come walking from the
dead,

All rough and black and weedy, with tangles in his
hair,
And not a word to wish me luck, but eyes that stare
and stare?

“ Oh! lover, drownèd lover, I loved you very well,
But all drowned lovers in the world can't drown the
wedding-bell!
I'm not yet two-and-twenty, a maid can't always
weep,
Go sleep in those deep waters as drownèd men
should sleep! ”



JOHN G. NEIHARDT

EASTER, 1923

ONCE more the Ancient Wonder
Brings back the goose and crane,
Prophetic Sons of Thunder,
Apostles of the Rain.

In many a battling river
The broken gorges boom.
Behold, the Mighty Giver
Emerges from the tomb!

Now robins chant the story
Of how the wintry sward
Is litten with the glory
Of the Angel of the Lord.

His countenance is lightning,
And still his robe is snow,
As when the dawn was brightening
Two thousand years ago.

O who can be a stranger
To what has come to pass?
The Pity of the Manger
Is mighty in the grass!

Undaunted by Decembers,
The sap is faithful yet.
The giving Earth remembers
And only men forget!

HUMBERT WOLFE

IN THE STREET OF LOST TIME

REST and have ease;
Here are no more voyages;
fold, fold your narrow pale
hands; and under the veil
of night lie, as I have seen you lie
in your deep hair; but patiently
now that new loves, new days,
have gone their ways.



JOSEPH AUSLANDER

TO MY DESPOILER

YES, you have taken everything from me:
Beauty and love and all the measureless
Impatience of proud April; even our sea
Shouting under the gulls; all loveliness
Of form and sound and colour; all that we
Had touched; the curve of things we used to press
Glowing against our senses; mystery
And movement . . . everything taken . . . taken . . .

Yes,
Even the little brave irrelevancies
Like brooding water, dripping water-cress,
The cool dark noise of cropping; cruising bees
On hot gold expeditions—even these
You took from me—Oh spare me your caress,
Leave me at least my own stark loneliness!



JOSEPH AUSLANDER

IN ENVY OF COWS

THE cow swings her head in a deep drowsy half-
circle to and over
Flank and shoulder, lunging
At flies; then fragrantly plunging
Down at the web-washed grass and the golden
clover,
Wrenching sideways to get the full tingle; with one
warm nudge,
One somnolent wide smudge
Sacred to kine,
Crushing a murmurous afternoon of late lush August
to wine!

The sky is even water-tone behind suave poplar
trees—
Colour of glass; the cows
Occasionally arouse
That colour, disturb the pellucid cool poplar frieze
With beauty of motion slow and succinct like some
grave privilege
Fulfilled. They taste the edge
Of August, they need
No more: they have rose vapours, flushed silence,
pulpy milkweed.

W. H. DAVIES

THE RAINBOW

RAINBOWS are lovely things:
The bird, that shakes a cold, wet wing,
Chatters with ecstasy,
But has no breath to sing;
No wonder, when the air
Has a double-rainbow there!

Look, there's a rainbow now!
See how that lovely rainbow throws
Her jewelled arm around
This world, when the rain goes!
And how I wish the rain
Would come again, and again!



LOIS SEYSTER MONTROSS

TO CHARMIAN, UNBORN

MY body folded tawny wings
To walk with slow, uncertain feet;
My body put off silken things
For linen, humble and discreet;

My songs that were as butterflies,
So frail they bore but phantom gold,
Cling to the earth, and dare not rise
Out of the withered grass and mould;

My laugh is dumb that fluttered wild,
My hands are bare of shining rings,
My soul goes fasting that a child
Be born for silk and song and wings.



EDITH SITWELL

DAPHNE

WHEN green as a river was the barley,
Green as a river the rye,
I waded deep and began to parley
With a youth whom I heard sigh.
“I seek,” said he, “a lovely lady,
A nymph as bright as a queen,
Like a tree that drips with pearls her shady
Locks of hair were seen.
And all the rivers became her flocks
Though their wool you cannot shear,—
Because of the love of her flowing locks . . .
The kingly Sun like a swain
Came strong, unheeding of her scorn,
Bathing in deeps where she has lain,
Sleeping upon her river lawn
And chasing her starry satyr train.
She fled, and changed into a tree—
That lovely fair-haired lady . . .
And now I seek through the sere summer
Where no trees are shady.”

KARLE WILSON BAKER

OLD LACE

I. The Old, Old Elm

THE old, old elm has put on clouds of lace
Delicate as a bride's. A dawn-like grace
Covers a million dark-twigged memories,
A dryad gaiety is in her face;
And, light as lilac-spray against the skies,
New wonder is upborne by ancient stress.
I marvel at a mortal thing so wise
To weave herself enchantment for a dress,
And heal the feud of Time with Loveliness.

II. Let Me Grow Lovely

Let me grow lovely, growing old—
So many fine things do:
Laces, and ivory, and gold,
And silks need not be new;

And there is healing in old trees,
Old streets a glamour hold;
Why may not I, as well as these,
Grow lovely, growing old?

LOUISE AYRES GARNETT

SEEKIN'

SEEKIN', Massa Jesus,
Seekin' fer ter fin' you,
Seekin' whar de hilltop's
Leanin' on de blue;
Seekin' in de valley
Whar de co'n am tosslin',
Hopin' fer ter see you
Walkin' in de dew.
Seekin', Massa Jesus,
Seekin' fer ter fin' you,
Seekin' in de nighttime,
Lighttime, too.

Seekin' in de riber
Whar de wabes am flowin',
Flowin' wid a music
All deir mighty own;
Seekin' in de whirlwin'
Sweepin' down f'om Jedgment;
Seekin' in de grabeya'd
Unnerneaf de stone.
Seekin', Massa Jesus,
Seekin' fer ter fin' you,
Seekin' in de nighttime,
Lighttime, too.
I'll know you, Massa Jesus,
W'en at las' I fin's you,

Know you by yer conternance
Reachin' thoo de gloam,
By yer trick o' lookin'
Lak ez ef you'd fotched me,
Fotched me back ter Heab'n
Whar I has a home.
Seekin', Massa Jesus,
Seekin' fer ter fin' you,
Seekin' in de nighttime,
Lighttime, too.



V. SACKVILLE-WEST

SONG

IF I had only loved your flesh
And careless damned your soul to Hell,
I might have laughed and loved afresh,
And loved as lightly and as well,
And little more to tell.

But since to clasp your soul I strove
(That mountebank, that fugitive),
And poured the river of my love
Through meshes that, like Danaë's sieve,
Drained all I had to give,

Now nightly by the tamarisks
I pace, and watch the risen moon
Litter the sea with silver disks;
And pray of night one only boon:
Let my release be soon.



PIERRE VIVANTE

HYLAS, I HEAR YOU CALLING

HYLAS, I hear you calling from the marshes,
Down where the water sparkles in the grasses,
Calling with the voices of a hundred fiddles
That Winter passes.

When I approach with noiseless footsteps, trying
To see whence comes the lovely orchestration,
Peering here and there, suddenly it ceases—
Not a vibration!

Then, after quiet waiting, recommences
The swelling symphony of Spring's magicians,
Violins played in couch-grass and celandins
By hid musicians.

Pleasant it is to hear your voice, O Hylas,
Arising thinly sweet when beaming Hesper
And the Pleiads rise, and young lambs are feeding,
And south winds whisper.

Still in the thrall of ever sleepless maidens,
Divine Eunica, Nychea and Malis,
The Argive boy is heard if one will listen
Beside the chalice.

Auburn-haired Hylas, waking all the marshlands
With your clear call across the thickets ringing
So near at hand, yet seemingly so far off—
Ah, sweet your singing!

DOROTHY WELLESLEY

WINTER FLAME

SUN blistered ships on opal seas,
Pacific stars spilt round the skies,
What have I now to do with these,
Who know the wonder of your eyes?

I rose and went in search of pain,
When the gay spring passed through the land;
Oh clamorous spring, that cried in vain
The pulse and magic of your hand.

Then, sudden sleet and blossom flew
On currents of the glittering gale,
And the starch-hyacinth's spikes of blue
Flared proudly through the fallen hail.

But island spring, or starry wake,
Left love asleep, made calm a crime,
Oh fretting heart that longed to break,
That broke and bloomed in dark and rime.

Now, slow teams climb the winter flank,
New-ribboned, of the upland track;
Criss-cross the heavens blanched and blank,
Work down the wind with flying wrack.

From fieldside wood, and forward blown
Go branch and leaf and flying mane,
While horses move deliberate down
To straw stacks, by the sunken lane.

Or, by a smooth rook-speckled hill
The sculptured marble clouds are curled,
Like Genii of unholy will,
Rising in smoke above the world.

Now light and shade, from cloud or rift,
May rollick forth with banners brave,
And from a field the wind may lift
And chase the colour that it gave

So gallantly two breaths ago.
Or sheep-cries rack a blinded scene,
When sheets of fog are twisted low,
And strangled earth is robbed of green.

Now on the hedge the Traveller's Joy
Clambers like pipe smoke up the air;
And skeined along the liquid sky
Each evening tree is like a prayer.

Now in the fast oncoming night,
Beneath the steely flying snows,
The garden stretches black and white,
That gave the lupin and the rose.

What care if tropic harbours swirl,
Grape-coloured in the morning shine,
Or through the red pomegranates curl
The swags and tangles of the vine?

What care that beauty dwells supreme
In men and women, towns and ships,
Set dark against the gold of dream:
Temples, bright boats, and carven lips?

What care for hillsides where the heat
Puffs acrid from the glowing stone?
I've heard beneath my head the beat
Of your strong heart, which is my own.

What care though fire and colour flared
Eternal from the coral skies,
To one who in this darkness dared
To claim the secrets of your eyes?



CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

OF A CHILD THAT HAD FEVER

I BID you, mock not Eros
Lest Eros mock with you.
His is a hot distemper
That hath no feverfew.

Love, like a child in sickness,
Brilliant, languid, still,
In fiery weakness lying,
Accepts, and hath no will.

See, in that warm dispassion
Less grievance than surprise,
And pitiable brightness
In his poor wondering eyes.

Oh, delicate heat and madness,
Oh, lust unnerved and faint;
Sparkling in veins and fibres,
Division and attaint!

I bid you, mock not Eros;
He knows not doubt or shame,
And, unaware of proverbs,
The burnt child craves the flame.

ROBERT GRAVES

TWIN SOULS

THE hermit on his pillar top,
Shuddering lean and bare:
The glutton in his rowdy shop,
With velvet clothes to wear:

The hermit with his finger nails
Growing through his palms;
The glutton in his swallow-tails,
Humming hell-fire psalms.

Glutton

“By day I am a glutton,
But (this is my complaint)
In dreams I groan upon your stone,
A parched and giddy saint.”

Hermit

“By day I am a hermit,
But (this is my complaint)
In dreams a glutton of beef and mutton,
Kissing powder and paint.”

Then each began to say and see,
Which cut him like a knife,
“Visions of dark are more to me
Than this my waking life.”

Glutton

“ My body is feeble and fat,
My head has never been strong,
If I were to stand on your pillar,
I doubt I would stand for long.

“ Heigh me! I am growing old
And gone too far on my way,
In dreams of midnight, bold,
But a coward at break of day.”

Hermit

“ My body is feeble and thin,
My head has never been strong,
If I were to drink in your manner,
I doubt I would drink for long.

“ My eyes are a frosted glass,
My fists are clenched like buckles;
Could I please your saucy lass
With a hand that is only knuckles? ”

The glutton on his pillar top,
Shuddered cold and bare,
The hermit in his rowdy shop,
Groaned for hot despair.

They died and they were buried,
Both on the Easter Day,
Now joined as one in spirit,
Who lived apart in clay.

LAURENCE BINYON

HEARKEN TO THE HAMMERS!

HEARKEN to the hammers, endlessly hammer-
ing,
The din of wheels, the drone of wheels, the
furnaces
Panting, where Man as in a demon-palace toils
To forge the giant creatures of his brain.

He has banished the spring and the innocence of
leaves
From the blackened waste he has made; the infected
sky
Glooms with a sun aghast, and the murk of the night
Is peopled with tall flames like spirits insane.

He strips himself to the heat, not of the jovial sun,
But of the scorch of furnaces; with naked breast
Sweating beneath the iron and bleared glass, amid
The hammers' hammering and the wheels' roar.

Not with grapes of October trodden underfoot
Spurting juices of ripeness in runnels, his vats
Brim, but with gushes flickered-over and blinding,
Unshapen spilth and blaze of molten ore.

With a finger he lifts the weight of mountain-sides
Poised; the metal mass he shears red-hot in a trice;
He gives to the animate iron thews of force,
A Titan's pulse, and breath of fiery draught.

Monsters mightier far than himself he creates
To swim storming seas, and to mount in miles of
air,
To deride Space and the old opposition of Time:
Their speed is like strong drink that he has quaffed.

He has the tamed lightning to do his bidding, draws
Energies out of the veins of earth; he is armed
From all elements, woven as in a magic web;
He has stolen seeds of Death, wherewith to fight.

He holds fabled terrors of the ancient gods in his
hand—
In a handful of dust, earthquake and pestilence;
He exults to destroy, to obliterate, to be
Lord of the powers of the engulfing night.

Deafened with the hammers, inebriate with the sound
Of the powers he has raised out of their jealous lair,
He has fever within him, he becomes dizzy,
And craves, and knows not whither he is bound.

Shall he attain god-like felicity of ease,
Supreme articulate voice of nature's striving,
Or builds he a vast prison for himself, a slave
With iron of his own strong forging crowned?

O where is now the dew-dropt radiance of morning,
That sistered with him rock and reed and rippling
stream,
When simple of heart in the sun with a free body
He accepted all the boundaries of his mind?

Full of fears he was then, shadowed with helpless
 need
To propitiate Powers that threatened each footstep.
Has he escaped from those old terrors, to be prey
 Of fears more terrible because less blind?



DOROTHY ROBERTS

UNDERTONE

NIGHT, rustling the grey grass, is at your door;
Stir the coals quietly—then look once more
On the blue highroad, spread with mists that rise
From water-meads . . .
The spring dusk dies
From your square window panes; your firelight dips,
Tremblingly, to your jar of closed cowslips.

You can hear a horse tear the cool spring grass
At the road's edge, slowly—now his feet pass,
Stumbling, to his own field. Now, like a thread
Of sound drawn through the dark, wood waters
tread
On rocks and small round stones—and now, again,
The wind blows budded boughs against your pane.

“Rest now,” the grass says, “rest”—and your coals
part
To show the dreamlit caves of the fire's heart.
“Rest now,” the grass says. “Rest,” the blown trees
sing . . .
Up the high road you hear the inn sign swing.

WILFRID THORLEY

THE LONDONER'S CHARIOT

(The Conductor Speaks).

COME board my speeding chariot that bears you
for a brown or two
From shire to shire, by bridge and spire, from Lee
to Muswell Hill;
I pass by ancient palaces, I sweep across a Down
or two,
You'll swear it's worth a crown or two
Before the wheels are still.

From dawn to dark by city streets, with scarlet sides
I hurry down;
Quit sordid care, climb up my stair, and glide with
me along
And you may dream in Warren Wood or ponder on
a Surrey Down;
My wheels shall beat your worry down
And fill your soul with song.

Choose well your day, and if in doubt just ask some
wise old weather-head;
Take bread and cheese, and if you please, an apple
and a bun;
And you may revel half a day at Epping or at
Leatherhead,
As blithe as any feather-head
That dances in the sun.

There's pageant on the sky for you. The stately
clouds go speeding on,
A fleet of sail that braves the gale across the windy
vast;
Anon they seem a host of horse in sudden dust
stampeding on
To find fresh fields for feeding on,
Before the day is past.

And steeples far away you'll spy through veils of
mist that muffle them,
Where old and scarred they rise and guard God's
acre of dead souls;
And round them barley-stems that bow as sudden
breezes ruffle them,
And fairy fingers shuffle them,
With every wave that rolls.

You'll pass by many an ancient Inn, and see the
swinging sign of it;
You'll pass by marts of coster-carts, and gardens
sweet with musk;
And ever as you face the sky you'll see the changing
line of it,
Until the sun makes wine of it
And drowns the world in dusk.

So board my speeding chariot and leave your native
soil behind;
I fly like fire from shire to shire, from Sheen to
Seven Kings;

I've got a Spartan at the wheel, another drum of oil,
behind;

Though slower wheels may toil behind,
It's you that shall have wings.



W. H. DAVIES

SEE WHERE YOUNG LOVE

SEE where young Love sits all alone,
And sucks his thumb, and broods;
And all because you women have
These ever-changing moods.

See how he sits in this cold air,
That has the breath of tears;
Waiting until your mood has changed,
And one round drop appears.

Till one round trembling tear-drop leaps
From the corner of your eyes—
To show your mood has changed again,
And tears have made you wise.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER PERCY

FOR A WORD

HOW shall you ever know the adoration
I spread like samite cloths beneath your feet?
How shall you guess the brooding desolation
Learned from your eyes so passionless and sweet?

There must be some word like the star that pauses
In summer's rose transparency of dusk,
Or like the bird-note heard through slumber's gauzes
Between the hour of dew, the hour of musk;

There must be some one word that is more tender
Than any word my lips have ever learned
Without which I can never, never render
In speech the love your cool sweet love has earned.

You know as none my heart's forlorn distresses,
Its passionate tides, its daily tint and glow;
Why must there be within obscure recesses
This tenderness of love you can not know?

VIRGINIA LYNE TUNSTALL

WIND SONG

THERE'S a song in the wind to-night,
But who knows the words of it?

I, I know the words of it!

It is a song of old days,
Of love shivering and desolate,
Of empty rooms and forgotten faces. . . .

If I sang it, it would break your heart.



EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

KEEN

WEEP him dead and mourn as you may,
Me, I sing as I must:
Blessed be death, that cuts in marble
What would have sunk to dust!

Blessed be death, that took my love
And buried him in the sea,
Where never a lie nor a bitter word
Will out of his mouth at me!

This I have to hold to my heart,
This to take by the hand:
Sweet we were for a summer month
As the sun on the dry, white sand;

Mild we were for a summer month
As the wind from over the weirs;
And blessed be death, that hushed with salt
The harsh and slovenly years!

Who builds her a house with love for timber,
Builds her a house of foam;
And I'd rather be bride to a lad gone down
Than widow to one safe home.

FRANK KENDON

CHILD TO WHOM ALL WORDS

(To Barbara)

CHILD, to whom all words
Are pleasant sounds,
As to us the various calls of birds,
Pleasant before the joy is turned to thought,
Strange music strangely caught—
O Baby, for whose eyes
Colour in sun or shadow lives or dies
Fraught with no meaning, signifying but
Eyes open wide or tremulously shut,
Your small, receptive being rouses in me
New aspects of an old perplexity.

Strange miracle! that love,
Whose shape and substance out of nothing sprang,
Should thus take form, thus move,
Thus lie staring upon and listening to
A world not new, save as it seems to you,
A careless world, that through five senses shall
Fashion a soul to seem perpetual.

Not in that passive little form imprisoned yet,
Where does the spirit tarry that shall soon
Inform each action? Can five wits beget
A sixth from nothing? You will walk alone,
Lisp, laugh, and cry, love and be loved,
In a few years; although we cannot guess
Now in what way, or whence removed,
Shall enter the spirit of you, your separateness

Lie quiet and sleep,
Sleep on your mother's arm.
Not only does love vow itself to keep
Away all harm
From you; but breathes
Into your frailty, itself so strong;
And round about you, every moment, wreathes
Hope's lovely garland. 'Time shall not seem long
To the first word, the willing smile,
The wilful tears; and, in a little while,
By one more miracle, more marvellous than birth,
In your own right you too shall love the earth.

'Then shall the sadness and the rare surprise,
The cry of beauty, half-articulate,
Play on your heart, and slowly make you wise,
Some solitude bring and keep you separate:
Till, looking out, the souls of friends shall be
Distinct from yours, your own a mystery.

Memory shall not help you then,
Nor the wise utterances of men,
When from your puzzled soul the cry
Goes out, unanswered: "Who and whence am I?"

Unanswered? No; for there are some
To whom Truth's fullest mystery comes home;
And, Baby, you are to your mother's earlier cry
At once a riddle and a wise reply.

CONSTANCE FARMAR

THE ACTOR

NOW go to your soft bed and sleep—for I
Have acted well life's subtle travesty,
And sometimes made you laugh in lightsome mood
Because a little you have understood;
And sometimes on a sudden made you weep,
Because I showed the grief your soul hid deep.
The lights are darkened and the curtain down
And I have played for you the part of clown.

It matters not my meed of blame or praise,
Importunate, my heart cries out always
To love—and joy—and grief; how should you guess
The heights and depths of my strained pulses' stress?
The stage is silent now, the long Play done—
For you I played and to your eyes alone
But most I strove for this—to hide the throe
That would not let you sleep did you but know!



JOHN V. A. WEAVER

FANTASY

STARS—
If they could have a smell like flowers—

White, soft, sparklin',
So beautiful they hurt you—
Not proud and grand,
Just little and friendly—
Crowds and crowds of friends—

Night time by the river,
Stars all up above us,
Stars every side of us,
Like the whole Milky Way
Fell down around us—

And the way the blossoms smelled—

Stars—
If they could have a smell like flowers—

Honeysuckle!

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

TO L.H.B. (1894-1915)

LAST night for the first time since you were dead
I walked with you, my brother, in a dream.
We were at home again beside the stream
Fringed with tall berry bushes, white and red.
“Don’t touch them: they are poisonous,” I said.
But your hand hovered, and I saw a beam
Of strange, bright laughter flying around your head;
And as you stooped I saw the berries gleam.
“Don’t you remember? We called them Dead Man’s
Bread.

I woke and heard the wind moan and the roar
Of the dark water tumbling on the shore.
Where—where is the path of my dream for my eager
feet?

By the remembered stream my brother stands
Waiting for me with berries in his hands.
“These are my body. Sister, take and eat.”



KATHERINE MANSFIELD

BUTTERFLY LAUGHTER

IN the middle of our porridge plates
There was a blue butterfly painted,
And each morning we tried who could reach the
butterfly first.
Then the Grandmother said: "Do not eat the poor
butterfly."
That made us laugh.
Always she said it and always it started us laughing.
It seemed such a sweet little joke.
I was certain that one fine morning
The butterfly would fly out of the plates,
Laughing the teeniest laugh in the world,
And perch on the Grandmother's lap.

LITTLE BROTHER'S SECRET

WHEN my birthday was coming
Little Brother had a secret.
He kept it for days and days
And just hummed a little tune when I asked him.
But one night it rained
And I woke up and heard him crying;
Then he told me.
"I planted two lumps of sugar in your garden
Because you love it so frightfully.
I thought there would be a whole sugar tree for your
birthday.
And now it will be all melted."
Oh, the darling!

GEORGE STERLING

THE YOUNG WITCH—1698

(Elder Davenport Speaks)

CRY bravely, O town-crier,
(And ye, young men, beware!)
How Yale Ratchford, the strong smith,
Is gone God knoweth where.

Yea, the tall smith is gone,
And comes not home again.
Though he had a shrewish wife,
He was a man among men.

He shall drink no more ale,
Nor smoke at the tavern door,
Nor sing old songs at his forge,
And wrestle young men no more.

This he got for being so strong,
And this for being so bold
As to have in scorn the white witch
Who slept in her hair of gold.

By the dark pond in the hills
She lived when her dam died,
With a black cat which minded her,
And a black dog at her side.

In pine-wood and marshy places
Her low song was sung,
Where long moss is, and toadstools
The hue of a goblin's tongue.

Where got she her sullen mouth
And where her swaying form?
Would she live on eggs and apples
When the blood of men is warm?

All the town people went shy of her
When the Ratchford baby died.
Folk tell how she laughed that day,
And no folk say she cried.

Yale Ratchford cut him a switch
From a hickory at his door,
And he went up among the hills
To see she laughed no more.

There were whispers of a hanging
The day that he went forth,
As had been done by holy men
At Salem in the north.

A bear was shot at Hadlyme
With fur as soft as silk,
And Goodman Ames of Saybrook
Found minnows in the milk.

That night the geese went over,
A-belling for the pole.
Some say it was the dark hounds
That bay a loosened soul.

But saved, or damned for ever,
He comes back home no more,
And we who searched at the witch's house
Found grass against the door.

It was not wise to go hillward
With hand shut on a switch;
It is not given to young men
To rid the land of a witch—

Not with eyes so wide apart,
And in a face so white.
Not if she wander naked
By a shrunk moon's light.

What shall he do her of service,
As the strong do for the fair?
Shall he forge her an iron marriage-ring,
Or shoes for the devil's mare?

For they ha' gone forever—
Vanished, as men say true,
In blue sky or blue water
Or the wind between the two.



EDWIN MUIR

REVERIE

THE dark road journeys to the darkening sky,
The twilight settles like a circling pool,
The railway bridge is lifted up on high,
And the unerring lines are beautiful.

A soldier and his girl in casual walk
Pass heavily, their garments creased with woe,
Like stiff slow-labouring statues; yet they talk
In peace and gather comfort as they go.

In the small cabin by the railway-side
A lonely concertina by some priest
Of guileless joy is played; its sound goes wide
Like the blunt brumming of a vague-voiced beast.

I stand, and thin-toned anguish frets my heart
Over the cabin-boy who all the night
Sits in his thoughtless paradise apart
And in his lonely monologue finds delight;

And over these two who, in half-dumb talk,
With broken gestures and half-shapen speech,
In unintelligible rapture walk,
Too far for vain and longing thought to reach.

O, why should fading form and falling sound
Such sculptured shapes of deep division take?
Why do we walk with muted footsteps round
In this strong trance called life from which none
wake?

Whither do these blind-journeying lovers go?
What does he wait, the boy with idle hands?
And I who stand in idle questioning so?

We walk all four in strange and different lands.

These lovers never will return again;
That sound has died long since within the gloam.
Why do I wait still with my foolish pain?
All, all at last must take their sorrow home.



PHYLLIS MÉGROZ

HERE LIES . . .

HERE lies one who hearkens still
Earthly cries, the mortal thrill.

Once, when golden day was done,
Lifting light the graveyard stone,
Up she rose and went alone,
Through the grasses lush and cool,
Past the glamour of the pool,
In whose lily-circled glass
Her enchanted image was.
Stars came glimmering through the night
Silver-eyed on her delight.
Down the garden-walk she went,
Rose, carnation to her bent
With their offerings of scent.
Peacocks stiffly sprung from yew,
Stepped aside to let her through—
O, the darkness of the house,
Still, so still, she heard the mouse
Hid behind the wainscot stir
In affrighted sense of her.
Shadows on the carved stair
Crowded round her everywhere,
With their fearful wings spread out,
Sighing sorrow, sighing doubt.
Soft the latch aside she slipped,
In she glided laughing-lipped—
But he shrieked in terror wild:

“ Holy Mother, Holy Child,
Ghosts about my chamber pace,
Hear me, Jesu, in thy grace.”
Grief more bitter than death’s cup
Broke her bright renewal up.
Back she laid her in earth’s womb,
Waiting, waiting there—for whom?



WITTER BYNNER

WISTARIA

CLOUDS dream and disappear;
Waters dream in a rainbow and are
gone;
Fire-dreams change with the sun
Or when a poppy closes;
But now is the time of year
For the dark earth, one by one,
To show her slower dreams. And
nothing she has ever done
Has given more ease
To her perplexities
Than the dreaming of dreams like these:
Nor irisis,
Not any spear
Of lilies or cup of roses,
But these pale, purple images,
As if, from willows or from pepper-
trees,
Shadows were gleaming on the Buddha's
knees.

WILLARD WATTLES

FROM THE PARTHENON I LEARN . . .

FROM the Parthenon I learn
Whatever in our souls shall burn
Like the white flame of Phidias,
It shall not change, it shall not pass.

From the pyramids I know
How the stately soul may grow,
Wind and sand its enemies,
Through the embarrassed centuries.

From the Taj Mahal I see
Grief hath its own majesty;
And the Alhambra's shattered towers
Mind me of immortal hours.

That pale mountain of Milan
Flushing like a rose with dawn,
Tells how death can only be
A lovely thing we do not see.

JOHN CRAWFORD

SONG OF THE ARKANSAS

UP the Arkansas I come,
Bringing all the might of Spain
To the wilderness:
De Soto, I, Spanish explorer.
Up the Arkansas I come,
Rowed by stalwart warriors,
Brawny, naked redskins;
Softly their paddles splash in oily water,
Cleanly they cut through the yellow waste of
water,
And the music of the dripping water
Sings to me of Spain.

As I ride, as I ride,
Peering sharp to either side,
Trees and bushes crowd to see
Spain go by.
Straight ahead the round, hot sun-disk—
Glare I can outstare—
Tilting gold upon the river,
Spilling a golden footway on the river,
Trailing a gleaming train upon the water:
The darkness is a nimble Negro slave
Clutching with dusky fingers at the train;
And she is a courtly dame,
Powdered and spangled with good red gold.

Gold! Gold!
On the river!

Alight in my eyes!
Awkward hands drag a cauldron down the
sky,
Draining a molten blaze into my eyes,
Flinging a golden fairway on the river.

Spain is far,
Spain is far beyond the waters—
Here, with my sword,
I will be king;
On that high rock
I will sit,
Taking the tributes of corn and dancing
maidens
And glistening precious things—
I will be king!

Dance! Dance!
On the river,
Strange bright shapes;
Toss to the air
Your burning hair.

Up the river
Grey thieves come creeping—
Faster! Faster!
Give me the paddle!
Under their cloaks they hide—
They are snatching the gold of the river—
All the gold of the river! . . .

*

Nightmare creeps upon me;
Still the adventurous wind
Sings and romps with the river—

Up the Arkansas I came;
Rowed by stalwart warriors. . . .



LADY MARGARET SACKVILLE

THREE EPITAPHS

I

DISOWN me not, O! patient Mother Earth!
Restless was I, a rebel from my birth;
But now thy prodigal and weary son
Seeks pardon at thy breast—his folly done.

II

O! ROSE-RED blossom, shake your wings and fall
From the safe shelter of the sunny wall!
Your fruit?—Lament it not; it might have been
Like mine (which came to ripeness), sour and green.

III

MY light is out, yet will I prophesy
Men, still unborn, will show more light than I;
And am content that other men in turn
Against *my* darkness shall the brighter burn!

MARYA ZATURENSKY

“ THE GIRL TAKES HER PLACE AMONG THE MOTHERS ”

“ *To link the generations each to each.* ”—Tennyson.

I WAKE in the night with such uncertain gladness,
Fearing the little pain beneath my heart,
The little pains that cease again and start,
Delicious fear, that aches with a strange madness.

“ And is this I,” I say, seeing my shadowed face
In the old mirror where I laughing saw,
So long ago, beautiful without flaw,
Its delicate young lines, and careless grace.

This pain, these happy pains, that seem to blend
In my young blood with old forgotten mothers,
Daughters of my race and unremembered others—
The pain that foretells life’s beginning and end.

And is this I, I say, beholding my body’s line,
Fragile and young but not the body I knew.
Now I am drunken with the ancient wine—
“ Child, as it was with others, so with you.”

ROBERT FROST

THE STAR-SPLITTER

“YOU know Orion always comes up sideways.
Throwing a leg up over our fence of mountains,
And rising on his hands, he looks in on me
Busy outdoors by lantern-light with something
I should have done by daylight, and, indeed,
After the ground is hard, I should have done
Before it froze, and a gust flings a handful
Of waste leaves at my smoky lantern chimney
To make fun of my way of doing things,
Or else fun of Orion’s having caught me.
Has a man, I should like to ask, no rights
These forces are obliged to pay respect to? ”
So Brad McLaughlin mingled reckless talk
Of heavenly stars with hugger-mugger farming,
Till having failed at hugger-mugger farming,
He burned his house down for the fire insurance
And spent the proceeds on a telescope
To satisfy a lifelong curiosity
About our place among the infinities.

“What do you want with one of those blame’
things?”

I asked him well beforehand. “Don’t you get
one!”

“Don’t call it blamed: there isn’t anything
More blameless in the sense of being less
A weapon in our human fight,” he said.

“I’ll have one if I sell my farm to buy it.”

There where he moved the rocks to plough the
ground
And ploughed between the rocks he couldn't move
Few farms changed hands; so rather than spend
years
Trying to sell his farm and then not selling,
He burned his house down for the fire insurance
And bought the telescope with what it came to.

He had been heard to say by several:
“The best thing that we're put here for's to see;
The strongest thing that's giving us to see with's
A telescope. Some one in every town
Seems to me owes it to the town to keep one.
In Littleton it may as well be me.”
After such loose talk it was no surprise
When he did what he did and burned his house down.

Mean laughter went about the town that day
To let him know we weren't the least imposed on,
And he could wait, we'd see to him to-morrow.
But the first thing next morning we reflected,
If one by one we counted people out
For the least sin, it wouldn't take us long
To get so we had no one left to live with.
For to be social is to be forgiving.
Our thief, the one who does our stealing from us,
We don't cut off from coming to church suppers,
But what we miss we go to him and ask for.
He promptly gives it back; that is, if still
Uneaten, unworn out, or undisposed of.
It wouldn't do to be too hard on Brad

About his telescope. Beyond the age
Of being given one's gift for Christmas,
He had to take the best way he knew how
To find himself in one. Well, all we said was
He took a strange thing to be roguish over.

Some sympathy was wasted on the house,
A good old-timer dating back along;
But a house isn't sentient; the house
Didn't feel anything. And if it did,
Why not regard it as a sacrifice,
And an old-fashioned sacrifice by fire,
Instead of a new-fashioned one at auction?

Out of a house and so out of a farm
At one stroke (of a match), Brad had to turn
To earn a living on the Concord railroad
As under-ticket-agent at a station
Where his job, when he wasn't selling tickets,
Was setting out up track and down not plants,
As on a farm, but planets, evening stars,
That varied in their hue from red to green.

He got a good glass for six hundred dollars.
His new job gave him leisure for star-gazing.
Often he bid me come and have a look
Up the brass barrel, velvet black inside,
At a star quaking in the other end.
I recollect a night of broken clouds,
And underfoot snow melted down to ice,
And melting further in the wind to mud.
Bradford and I had out the telescope.

We spread our two legs as we spread its three,
Pointed our thoughts the way we pointed it,
And standing at our leisure till the day broke,
Said some of the best things we ever said.
That telescope was christened the Star-splitter,
Because it didn't do a thing but split
A star in two or three the way you split
A globule of quicksilver in your hand
With one stroke of your finger in the middle.
It's a Star-splitter if there ever was one,
And ought to do some good if splitting stars
'S a thing to be compared with splitting wood.

We've looked and looked, but after all where are we?
Do we know any better where we are,
And how it stands between the night to-night
And a man with a smoky lantern chimney?
How different from the way it ever stood?



SCHUYLER B. JACKSON

FUNERAL

(For T.S.M.)

NO raven croaked and no bell tolled
When we walked out into the cold
Winter of a day grown old.

The sky was pewter, the ground was lead,
The frozen birds song-choked and dead.
We thought our thoughts, and no word
said.

Right foot, left foot, shuffle through leaves;
A fog-soaked wind sighs up and grieves,
And darkness through the darkness heaves.

Right foot, left foot, sludge along;
No words to our marching song,
Only the cry, "How long! How long!"

I heard a voice grow out of the air:
"Our life flies here and our life flies there,
But the hawks of death swoop everywhere.

"For love was born from foam on the sea,
And an angel-child was given Mary,
But Christ went dead on a crooked tree.

"O spirits flown from sight or sound,
O little worms under the ground,
Weep for the sorrow I have found."

No raven croaked and no bell tolled
When we walked out into the cold
Winter of a day grown old;

But the sky was pewter, the ground was lead,
The frozen birds song-choked and dead,
And we thought our thoughts, though no word
said.

LOUIS GOLDING

KINDLED FROM DEEP DARKNESS

MOMENTS of beauty—so unexpected, radiant
As the barbed fires of a bird in deep darkness
Suddenly launches into broad blue day;
How to celebrate them, with what ceremonial?
To utter a cry of the soul's jubilation,
Or to fall down on dumb grass and pray?

Mortal, immortal? Do they merge utterly
Into blank time before and behind them
As a last gold wave in the levelled grey?
Or do they bide their hour of resurrection,
Securer than armies, bronze hoof and iron cannon,
As a fallen seed bides in the profound clay?

What need you trouble with vain enquirings
The surly gods or your own ignorant spirit?
Yours to await the wild moments. They
From that deep darkness sometimes leap fearfully
Like a slim antelope with twitching nostrils.
Spring, tiger, pitiless upon your prey!

Sometimes—be wary!—there is equal combat
Fang against fang in the forest clearing.
The thick trees murmur, “Be slain or slay!”
Yea but the last, the last of moments,
Shall a tall fire kindle from deep darkness
And you sucked flameward like a wisp of hay!

EDA LOU WALTON

AUTUMN NIGHT IN FRESNO

THE stars hang low above the weighted vineyards,
The moon runs slowly down the stream of trees,
I reach my hand to catch a drifting shadow
And slip into wet silver to my knees;
Bright ripples break around me in clear silence,
I wade along the river's flowing grass,
Plucking a cluster, crystal-sweet and purple,
Remembering the springtime as I pass.



RUTH MANNING-SANDERS

MARGERY DAW (A CORNISH SAINT)

SEE-SAW, Margery Daw,
This is the tale of Saint Margery Daw,
And the dreams and visions Saint Margery saw:

She dreamed she walked Jerusalem Street
And saw how bright the temple shone
When they who bought and sold were gone,
Their money scattered at Christ's feet,
While many a painted stall and seat
About the courts lay overturned.
There pavements glowed, and pillars gleamed
With golden palms, and candles burned
To light the brazen coins that seemed
To wink like tears about Christ's feet;
Who stood where blazed the cherubim,
While multitudes in blue and red
Sang Him songs for daily bread,
And all their work was praising Him.
— Saint Margery dreamed for a year and a day,
Till she hadn't a penny her debts to pay,
See-saw, Margery Daw,
Then they sold her bed and she lay upon straw.

See-saw, Margery Daw,
While Saint Margery lay on her straw,
Another fair vision Saint Margery saw.

'Twas the woman who broke her precious box
And poured the ointment on Jesus' locks,

Who all her gold and silver spent
To fill the house with spikenard scent.
—Saint Margery watched this vision so long,
That the spiders came to her house in a throng,
Their webs from her windows wavered down,
The clothes moths nestled in her gown,
And dust she had for eiderdown,
Who, wrapt in saintly dream and prayer,
Forgot to comb her fine, black hair.
See-saw, Margery Daw,
The starlings and sparrow-birds stole her straw;
Neither starlings nor sparrows would Margery hurt,
So down Saint Margery lay in the dirt.

See-saw, see-saw,
The wind blew cold on Margery Daw,
But one last vision Saint Margery saw.

'Twas Jesus Christ in heaven when He
Shook the boughs of the healing tree;
In robe of hyacinth He came,
And like a moon in golden haze
Kindling boughs of chrysophrase,
His halo lit those boughs with flame;
And as the coloured fruit fell down
'Twas caught within the close-cupped hands,
—The brown and white and yellow hands,
Of rich and poor man, knave and clown,
Blind man, saint, and palsied sick,
King and fool and lunatic,
Who, like flowers of the field,
In chequered multitude there kneeled,

Till of Christ's bounty they were healed.
—Saint Margery watched this vision by night,
Till Christ's robe blurred across her sight;
Saint Margery watched this vision by day,
Till her pulse grew faint and her eyelids grey;
Then in Margery's village the people say,
That the pisgies came and fetched her away.

See-saw, see-saw,
Here ends the story of Margery Daw.
For from the land where the pisgies dwell
There's none come back on the road to tell
Whether they washed her and made her fair,
And clothed her in blue and combed her hair,
And put her to sleep in a goose feather bed
With pillows of white and covers of red—
Only a rumour blows on the air,
That, sleep she in down or sleep she bare,
Saint Margery's visions have come true there.



GEOFFREY DEARMER

PAVLOVA

TRANSFIGURED and safely entrancing
The ghost of a swan,
With head, hands, and heart she is dancing;
Mortality's gone,
Crumbling mortality's gone.

O is she immortal, a spirit,
Life's ultimate sum?
Has the world we hereafter inherit
Now, verily, come?
The Kingdom of Heaven has come.

Behold now the spirit of woman,
The form of a bird,
A wonder half bird and half human,
A cry only heard
In the call and reply of a bird.

Behold her on music as airy
And pale as a wraith,
Rise on the wind like a fairy
And hover and breathe—
And sink in the twilight of death.

Now the hush of ethereal feather
That floats to the floor,
Than all her lithe movements together
Is lovelier far,
As songs hushed to quietness are.

Now with the silence are sleeping
Her swoop and her poise;
And Movement were now a thief creeping,
And Music a noise,
And Comment a fool's vacant voice.



HERBERT E. PALMER

AN EASTER POEM FOR ALL THE YEAR

HUSH harlequin brain, wild brain! a tale I'd tell.
Speak louder whispering soul, while halts the
morn.

Old though it be, yet some who listen well
Find it still new, and all its truths unworn.

It is of strange wild tenderness and ruth,
A story of bright sacrifice and pain,
Of One who strove to bring men Springtide youth
And out of Death make dark things fair again.

Because of this sweet women were defiled,
Tortured with whips and fire and branding rods,
Or flung to tawny lions and tigers wild,
Because of this the Roman burnt his gods.

Because of this in Ages dim revealed
Mailed knights renounced their tourneys and their
wine,
Blazoned a mystic cross on curving shield
And spilt their blood in lonely Palestine.

Because of this each martyrizing flame
Hurt men not more than when a light wind flies,
For on its wings the starry Vision came
That folded back the Gates of Paradise.

ETHEL ASHTON EDWARDS

TO MY BELOVÈD DEAD

I

I N the profound and dreadful calm of night,
Worn with the newness of my grief, I come
Dry-eyed, and fall beside you, spent and dumb,
Dreading the dawn, with all its aching light;

Dreading the day, and all it holds for me
Of restlessness and forms that come and go;
New things to do, new things to see and know,
That were not yet, when you were there to see;

And shut my eyes, and for a while pretend
That I can lean against you, feel your hand,
Hear your heart beat, and know you understand,
Though you are farther than the wide world's end.

Ah! My Belovéd, swiftly, silently,
Surely your kind, kind ghost shall comfort me.

II

It cannot be that you shall no more come
Radiant with laughter, holding hands for mine,
Seeking my soul for Love's most earnest sign,
Meeting my thought with eloquent thought and
dumb.

It cannot be that I must look for you
There, where the Summer flames, and find you not;
Of splendid sunsets know you all forgot,
Nor find you in the rain, nor the sky's blue.

For here the lily all her sweetness yields,
And all my heart is open to the sun;
And, seeking peace in grief, the long day done,
I find it in the silver, moonlit fields.

Then, by the beauty of the world I know
That you are here, and will not let me go.



KATHARINE TYNAN

THE LAST VOYAGE

SOME morning I shall rise from sleep,
When all the house is still and dark.
I shall steal down and find my ship
By the dim quayside, and embark.

Nor fear the seas nor any wind.
I have known Fear, but now no more.
The winds shall bear me safe and kind,
Long-hoped for and long-awaited for.

To no strange country shall I come,
But to mine own delightful land,
With Love to bid me welcome home
And Love to lead me by the hand.

Love, you and I shall cling together,
And look long in each other's eyes.
There shall be rose and violet weather
Under the trees of Paradise.

We shall not hear the ticking clock,
Nor the swift rustle of Time's wings,
Nor dread the sharp dividing stroke
Being come now to immortal things.

You of that beauty shall be fain,
Being now no new inhabitant,
Its beauties to point out, explain,
And all its dear delights to vaunt.

They will not end in a thousand years.
Love, we shall be so long together
Withouten any sword to fear,
Glad in the rose and violet weather.

With all those wonders to admire,
And the heart's hunger satisfied,
Given at the last the heart's desire
We shall forget we ever died.

Oh, in some morning dateless yet
I shall steal out in the sweet dark
And find my ship with sails all set
By the dim quayside, and embark.



ELINOR WYLIE

SHEPHERD'S HOLIDAY

TOO honest for a Gipsy, too lazy for a farmer,
What should you be but a shepherd on the hills,
Herding sheep with sad faces
Over grass-grown places,
High above a web of streams and willow-trees and
mills?

Too tame for a Gipsy, too wild for a dairy-maid,
What could I be but a silly goose-girl,
Tending hissing white snakes
By weed-green lakes,
Crying in the dew-fall with my hair out of curl?

Too silent for the neighbours, too simple for the
townspeople,
What shall we do who love each other so?
I'll teach your grey sheep
To guard you from the steep,
You'll catch me back from drowning where my
dark lake lies deep,
I'll pluck a feather pillow that shall sing you to
sleep
Up among the rocks where the blueberries grow.

HORTENSE FLEXNER

FRENCH CLOCK

TIME is a heavy legend to be told
By this slight clock, shapely and full of guile,
With brilliants at its throat, the sun in gold,
Louis' own seal, above its painted smile.
Some clocks have souls; they grow into a wall,
Become a part of lives they tick away;
This is a toy, perfect, sufficient all
Unto itself—a butterfly at bay.

Hours and years? They change but do not pass!
In this light world of gold and ormolu
Time is one splendid moment under glass!
Mad little clock, so gay it never knew
Blood on the hours, a lifted pike—a head—
And hot throats roaring that the King is dead!

HELEN HOYT

TWO LOVE POEMS

October Letter

BRING with you, for me to have, a spray of sweet
olive,
Or one of the leaves that fall from your fig-tree by
the door.

There was a yucca-tree by the door, I remember,
With flowers of moonlight—
You cannot pluck moonlight to bring in your pocket!
An acorn would do, or a burr, or stone,
Or a pink leaf from the wild grape.
Has the frost left any dahlias untaken?
Have any new dahlias bloomed since that day?
You gathered the dahlias for me that day and laid
them in my arms
As if heaped rainbows were laid in my arms:
So I think are the colours of yourself that you have
given me to hold.

You have given glory to me, giving me your love.
If your garden has dahlias still
Bring, this time, a single white one.
There is a you I would own that no colour tinges.

Day's End

DROOPING were the violets and the roses you
 had given me;
I carried them against my coat, their heads drooped
 over.
So we whom love had held against its breast all
 night,
Whom the city had held against its beating side all
 day,
Drooped with colours faded, stems without strength.
But very fragrant still were the violets, still dear;
Fragrant and dear the crumpled petals of the roses;
Your darkened eyes, your languid hands, dear as
 before.
We felt no diminution of love, of nearness;
Beautiful and desirable our tired contentment
 together
As we lingered from street to street to the street of
 parting.
Precious as any vivid passion our pale quiet.

F. W. HARVEY

STARS

NOTHING more friendly, old,
Man knows on earth than these
Bright shapes that shepherds and sailors
have blessed
In fields; on seas.

Yet millions of strange years
They, set in Heaven's dark face,
Have sung of loneliness, dancing
To empty space.



KATHERINE MANSFIELD

THERE WAS A CHILD ONCE

THERE was a child once.
He came to play in my garden;
He was quite pale and silent.
Only when he smiled I knew everything about him,
I knew what he had in his pockets,
And I knew the feel of his hands in my hands
And the most intimate tones of his voice.
I led him down each secret path,
Showing him the hiding-place of all my treasures.
I let him play with them, every one,
I put my singing thoughts in a little silver cage
And gave them to him to keep. . . .
It was very dark in the garden
But never dark enough for us. On tiptoe we walked
 among the deepest shades;
We bathed in the shadow pools beneath the trees,
Pretending we were under the sea.
Once—near the boundary of the garden—
We heard steps passing along the World-road;
O how frightened we were!
I whispered: “Have you ever walked along that
 road?”
He nodded, and we shook the tears from our eyes . . .

There was a child once.
He came—quite alone—to play in my garden;
He was pale and silent.
When we met we kissed each other,
But when he went away, we did not even wave.

PHYLLIS MÉGROZ

“ INCIPIT VITA NOVA ”

ONE night, through mists of sleep there
spoke

A voice, and in my dreams I woke
And saw the four walls of the world
Draw near together as the curled
Drooped petals of a closing flower
To fold me round, and in that hour
I saw with secret terror driven
A dwindling God; a shrunken heaven.
I saw the final grain of sand
Time's hour glass held, I saw Death's hand
Grown impotent to strike or slay,
I watched men walk upon their way
With calm grey faces, cold and palled,
As if they knew not they were walled
Like captive spectres spell-enthralled.
“ Awake,” I cried, “ You do not know
Where you are called, nor why you go.
The sport of God you are become,
He sees you blind of soul and dumb,
Enchanted by the magic glass
Where pageantry as life does pass,
And all that is not, certain seems.
Awake, awake, and rend your dreams!
Your eyes unshutter, and behold
The earth grown shadowy and cold;
And see in interstellar space
A new God in the old God's place,
Whose eyes look upward rapt and far

To where diviner godheads are.
The last hour spreads its faltering wings,
A new Time into being springs.”
But groping hands struck out and tore
The fragile dream-web that I bore;
And in my ears as I awoke,
The sobbing voice of Vision spoke.



SARA TEASDALE

LOVE SONGS

I

The Beloved

IT is enough of honour for one lifetime
To have known you better than the rest have
known,
The shadows and the colours of your voice,
Your will, immutable and still as stone;

The wild heart so lonely and so gay,
The sad laughter and the pride of pride,
The tenderness, the depth of tenderness
Rich as the earth and wide as heaven is
wide.

II

Land's End

THE shores of the world are ours, the solitary
Beaches that bear no fruit, nor any flowers,
Only the pale sea-grass that the wind harries
Hours on unbroken hours.

No one will envy us these empty reaches
At the world's end, and none will care that we
Leave our lost footprints where the sand forever
Takes the unchanging passion of the sea.

III

Absence

I CANNOT sleep, the night is hot and empty,
 My thoughts leave nothing lovely in my
 heart,
 You love me, and I love you, life is passing,
 We are apart.

The August midnight vibrates with the voices
 Of insects and their passions frail and shrill—
 Oh from what whips, oh from what secret
 scourgings
 All of earth's creatures bow before her will!

IV

"I Shall Not Go Back"

I SHALL not go back to the place that I love,
 I shall never try to repeat the perfect hour;
 I know the past is gone, yet it is safe enough
 Even to the small blue six-pointed flower.

They say the earth itself in millions of years
 Will drift like fine grey ash that the wind has
 whipped and tossed,
 And the blackened sun will grope blindly among the
 spheres—
 But I am not afraid that the things I love will be
 lost.

The Hour

WAS it foreknown, was it foredoomed
Before I drew my first small breath?
Will it be with me to the end,
Will it go down with me to death?

Or was it chance, would it have been
Another, if it was not you?
Could any other voice or hands
Have done for me what yours can do?

Now without sorrow and without elation
I say the day I found you was foreknown,
Let the years blow like sand around that hour,
Changeless and fixed as Memnon carved in
stone.



E. H. VISIAK

THE COWLED APE, OR PRETTY POLLY'S PRIDE

WE had an ape aboard ship;
Was come from Barbary,
That with a gaudy parrot
Consorted merrily.

The gaunt and withered monkey
Was pretty Polly's pride;
But when he mowed and muttered,
She clawed hold on his hide.

And so for a protection
An old sail we unbent,
And made a hooded covering,
Which served our good intent.

The cowled and monkish mantle
From crown to lean shank fell:
If 'chance he walked in moonlight,
'Twas like a monk of hell.

Upon a grislier feature
The bright moon never gleamed:
A dusky ghoul, or mummy,
Becloaked in canvas seemed.

Now, one night came a pirate—
Her sails as white as may:
She raked our masts and rigging,
And mowed our men like hay.

Our flag, as smitten blossom,
Fell fluttering from the tree,
Which toppled in a tangle,
And draggled in the sea.

Poor Polly in the tempest,
The iron hail, the reek,
From spar to spar lamented
With many a dolorous shriek.

She cursed, she swore, she cackled,
She clawed a yard-arm bare;
And many a moony feather
Was floating in the air.

And when no haven offered,
Nor perch, nor brooding nest,
About the monkey circling,
She vented her protest.

But he far other matters
Revolving was intent:
Within the hood she darted,
Her wonted tenement.

Alone beside the bulwarks,
The cowlèd ape appeared:
The rogues rowed off to board us
Where that white figure reared.

The monkey by the gangway
Stood gibbering at the moon:
The pirate cox'n hallooed,
But ceased to halloo soon!

He sat up in the ship's boat,
And stiffened as the dead;
His bright eyes in the moonlight
Were starting from his head.

He raised his crooked finger;
And all sat staring soon—
Aye, every bully pirate
Was staring like a loon!

And, while the clouded moonshine
Grew dim as in a wood,
The parrot out and lighted
Upon the monkey's hood.

She screeched—a rending shrill screech;
And back to ship they rolled
As they had never hasted
For galleons full of gold.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

HAUNTED HOUSE

HERE was a place where none would ever come
For shelter, save as we did from the rain.

We saw no ghost, yet once outside again,
Each wondered why the other should be dumb;
For we had fronted nothing worse than gloom
And ruin, and to our vision it was plain

Where thrift, outshivering fear, had let remain
Some chairs that were like skeletons of home.

There were no trackless footsteps on the floor
Above us, and there were no sounds elsewhere.
But there was more than sound and there was more
Than just an axe that once was in the air
Between us and the chimney, long before
Our time. So townsmen said who found her there.

A. HUGH FISHER

THE OLD COSSACK

(*After Tolstoi*)

THE red wine glowed in the candle-light,
And Yeroshka winked at the dancing flame,
While his tongue wagged ceaselessly through the
night
And told of the deeds that had brought him fame.

“ Who was sent to the heights to kill Akhmet-Khan?
Who made the loveliest girl’s heart glow?
And who most relished God’s gifts to man—
And over whose grave will the green grass grow?

“ I have slain an eagle and kissed a queen:
The secret heart of the woods I know:
Death summons the mighty as well as the mean,
And over my grave will the green grass grow.

“ Here’s health to the Father and the Son!”
He emptied the flagon and slumbered and dreamed
Of a falcon perched on a silvered gun,
And the vale where the Terek river streamed

With its damp, brown sands along shores and bars:
He dreamed of the steppe and the “post’s” low
roof,
And a grazing horse and familiar stars,
And the mountains marvellously aloof.

EDWARD DAVISON

THE ENCHANTED HEART

HERE blew winter once with the snowstorms
 spurning
Hill and furrow and field till all were whitened;
Here it was the robin flew away frightened
When I went by dreaming of spring returning.

Now that I walk on self-same meadow and hill
Why seems winter the fairer, happier season,
And spring the very root of the mind's unreason?
Why do I ponder and roam unhappily still?

What do you lack to-day that you lacked not then,
O brooding heart, that you cannot be contented?
Far away, says the heart that was enchanted,
Long ago . . . in a dream O never again!

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the best poems of 1923

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